

TEACHING IN SCHOOLS, TRAINING COLLEGES AND COLLEGES

From the point of view of the Eugenist.

¹MEMORANDUM APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE
EUGENICS EDUCATION SOCIETY.²

In this memorandum both eugenics and sex hygiene will be considered, though they are essentially different. Eugenics is defined as "the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or mentally." In other words, it deals with all endeavours to utilise all those forces of nature which have in the past resulted in progress in the inborn qualities of living beings, in order to secure a continuation of that progress in the inborn qualities of mankind in the future.

Sex hygiene is the "science which deals with the preservation of health," in so far as that study is affected directly, or indirectly, by questions of sex. The teaching of sex hygiene is, therefore, mainly intended to safeguard the individual taught against dangers resulting from sex, or to assist teachers in safeguarding others against such dangers.

Eugenics look to the future, and sex hygiene looks mainly to the present. But in spite of this essential difference between these two studies, they become in a large measure tied together for the following reasons:—

In the first place, the mechanism of sex is the link which connects one generation with another, thus making possible the continuity of the stream of life; and sex is, therefore, an essential feature of the most powerful medium for improving or impairing the qualities of future generations. An understanding of the mechanism of sex and of sex hygiene is, consequently, an inherent part of the study of eugenics in its higher branches.

Then, again, if and when sex hygiene is taught the introduction of the eugenic ideal will unquestionably tend to elevate

¹ Memorandum formulated in support of verbal evidence given before the Education Reform Committee.

² Drawn up at the request of.

the subject and divert the mind from some of its unpleasant aspects. To study questions of sex in order to safeguard the future of mankind is more ennobling than to study such questions merely in order to avoid personal trouble.

It had, however, better now be stated definitely, once for all, that we do not advocate the teaching of sex hygiene in class at schools as a separate subject. We are convinced, moreover, that without touching on definite sexual questions at all it is possible at an age so early that these questions cannot be understood and should not be alluded to, to commence the laying of a useful foundation on which eugenic thought can ultimately be built.

We do advocate, however, that in elementary schools a general idea of the ceaselessly flowing stream of life, following immutable laws, should be imparted by means of nature studies. Moreover, the facts of life are generally known at a very early age amongst the poor, especially in industrial districts, and something may be done, we believe, to purify this knowledge by the indirect effects of training in elementary biology, zoology, botany, nature study, etc. Such instruction at schools will also greatly facilitate the task of privately imparting knowledge concerning questions of sex, which, unquestionably, should be undertaken at a later date. It is, however, only when the teacher has been thoroughly grounded in biology, sex hygiene, and eugenics that the improvement in the moral atmosphere at school, and the implanting of the eugenic ideal, is at any time likely to be successfully accomplished with the avoidance of undesirable references. And this knowledge on the teacher's part is certainly necessary to enable them to give simple and truthful answers to the simple questions as to the facts of life which young children often ask.

Though sex hygiene, in so far as it deals with immediate dangers, does not come within the province of eugenics, yet, in view of the foregoing considerations, eugenists as a body, we believe, regard it as an essential part of human knowledge, and, therefore, always to be imparted; but if it is only imparted after great danger has already been run, it will be, in a large measure, useless. We hope, therefore, that both eugenics and

sex hygiene will be considered in the reform of our educational system.

As to the nature of the reforms which are desirable on eugenic grounds, we hold that far the most important aim is to endeavour to elevate the moral natures of all citizens, so that they will be ready to make the personal sacrifices which may be demanded of them in order to promote racial progress. In the past the morality taught has dealt mainly with our duties to our neighbours, whilst in the future it must be taught that our duties towards posterity are even more important.

As to the scientific aspect of education, it will, no doubt, be held by many that we are at present far too ignorant of the action of the forces of nature in the past to make any attempt to utilise those forces in the future at all safely, in so far as they relate to inborn qualities. In this we do not agree. But granted the truth of this contention, will anyone dare to assert, in view of the enormous strides now being made by science, that it is probable, say, fifty years hence, we shall still be unable to deal with problems relating to the future progress of man, not only as regards his environment, but also in regard to his constitutional nature, on which his environment will have to act? The students now being taught at our schools and colleges are certain to have to face these questions, and the only way now to endeavour to insure that their action will then be as wise as possible is to give them the best possible foundation in all those sciences on which their ultimate action must be based.

We are, however, convinced even now that all who are responsible, either for the spreading of social virtues or the making of laws—and all of us are responsible in a measure—ought to understand the value to the race of inherent or inborn qualities. The inborn qualities of the nation of the future will assuredly be affected by all existing social reforms which influence the marriage, birth, and death-rates of the different sections of the community. Then, again, whilst social reform is, in the main, an endeavour to produce immediately beneficial changes of environment, the ultimate selective effects of environment in encouraging or discouraging parenthood amongst those en-

dowed with good inborn qualities, or in lessening or increasing the reproductive capacities of the unfit, must never be overlooked. The citizen must, in fact, understand something of the interdependence of heredity and environment, in order to properly perform his civic duties.

Let it then also be perfectly clear that we want no scientific principles inculcated which do not carry the practically universal consent of the scientific world. It is true that we believe that the efforts to promote racial progress will have to be based mainly on the science of heredity, and that a widespread knowledge of the facts, as they are gradually brought to light by this study, will be essential for success. But even if we are wrong in our present opinions, the refutation of our errors can only be made by those possessing knowledge superior to that which we possess; and to render such superior knowledge a possibility for the rising generation, a foundation must now be laid, a foundation which can only consist of the truth as we now believe it to be. Progress is certain to be made in the future, and our educational systems must be designed to facilitate that progress. This will best be done by laying a solid foundation of truth, and not by dwelling on the particular reforms now held to be desirable. The urging of such reforms, though essential to progress, had better be left out of educational curricula.

Passing on to consider the actual changes in existing methods of teaching which seem to us to be desirable, the subject may be divided under five heads, namely :—

- I. Children under ten or twelve.
- II. Boys and girls over ten or twelve.
- III. Training colleges.
- IV. Instruction out of class.
- V. Colleges other than training colleges.

I. Children under Ten or Twelve.

In this period the eugenic foundation is mainly laid in moral teaching. It should be given in the course of the ordinary lessons in an indirect manner, the object being to

inculcate a sense of responsibility for the ultimate effects in the future of our actions. This can be enforced in many ways, as, for instance, by showing that the bad effects of bad words do not die out quickly. It should, moreover, be definitely recognised that it is useful to familiarise the mind of the child with the ideas of marriage, parenthood, and the care of children through reading story books, and, in the case of girls, by encouraging them to play with dolls. Children may also be very early familiarised with the idea that children are apt to resemble their parents.

II. *Boys and Girls over Ten or Twelve.*

With older children all these ideas can be widened and deepened. Boys and girls very early realise that they belong to a nation, and the idea of responsibility for, and pride in their nation, not only of to-day, but of the distant future, should be strongly enforced. In history lessons the conception of a continuity in the growth of the nation should be introduced when possible. Nature study, showing the reign of law in nature, and how living beings are divided into orders, genera, species, and varieties can now be introduced. The idea of life as a ceaselessly flowing stream will aid in inculcating the idea of responsibility in parenthood at a later date; and at the end of school life this idea can be definitely enforced by reference to the laws of natural inheritance. Lastly, in order to facilitate sex instruction at a later date, the fertilisation of plants and the lower animals should be somewhat fully described in a strictly scientific manner.

III. *Training Colleges.*

It is essential in order to safeguard their pupils from grave dangers, that teachers should have a thorough knowledge of questions of sex. Sexual troubles not infrequently occur at school, and the ignorant teacher cannot possibly deal with them on right lines. Moreover, questions will be asked of the best teachers, that is, of those who make friends with their pupils and their pupils' parents, and if ignorant they will, to say the least, lose an invaluable opportunity of doing good. Lastly, on leaving school, or at a certain age at school, teachers should

deal with questions of sex in private conversations with their pupils, for many boys and girls every year have their prospects ruined merely from the want of such instruction.

The importance of a vivid sense of individual racial responsibility can be emphasised, together with the social advantage of good inherent quality in offspring. The dangers of alcoholism, sexual vice, and other agencies detrimental to the next generation can be indicated.

If sexual dangers are dealt with in this way, not being isolated from other subjects, they would more readily take their proper place in the minds of young people, neither being exaggerated nor ignored.

The training in questions of sex at training colleges should begin with a biological and anatomical instruction in regard to reproduction in man, this being dealt with purely scientifically. This training in class should be supplemented by private conversations, where questions would be asked which would not be asked in public, and where questions of sex should be dealt with without reserve. Teachers should be warned never themselves to give medical advice.

The foregoing suggestions have been made, no doubt, without reference to the needs of eugenics, but merely to indicate on educational grounds the absolute necessity of sex instruction at training colleges. This instruction can, however, be made of great value to the race if it be widened in certain directions. Such views as are widely accepted at the time concerning evolution in the past should be taught, and elementary ideas concerning the laws of natural inheritance should be inculcated. Moreover, the enforcement of the idea of parental responsibility—the eugenic ideal, in fact—in private conversations on sex, will tend to elevate the tone of these private conferences dealing with questions of sex.

IV. *Instruction Out of Class.*

Private instruction should, it is suggested, be given on matters of sex to pupils both at school or on leaving school, and at training colleges.

Those giving this instruction should be warned that it is inadvisable to touch on the questions of sex abuse, unless in

reference to any individual and particular need. When the matter has to be dealt with it should be carefully handled, and no opportunity given for the teaching to encourage wrongdoing through curiosity.

Since this instruction concerns sex hygiene rather than eugenics, and since the methods adopted must be left almost entirely in the hands of well-taught teachers, they will not here be discussed.

V. Colleges other than Training Colleges.

The student at college who intends to take a degree involving natural science is certain to have the opportunity of acquiring all he need know in order to take an intelligent interest in eugenic questions. Specialisation is, however, now carried so far in many universities that the highest degree in many subjects may be associated with nearly blank ignorance of all those sciences on which our action concerning the future of our race must depend. Specialisation is essential in all higher education; but is it necessary to abandon instruction in all other lines when specialisation begins in any one direction? The mind of the student in science should, it is submitted, be kept alive as regards its æsthetic needs. In a like manner, if lectures indicating the accepted views on evolution and heredity were included in the curricula of all colleges, not only would the interest of art students in scientific matters be stimulated, but the possibility of racial progress would be promoted.